Rural Housing our Ageing Population: Policy Initiatives (HAPPI 4)

This All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Housing and Care for Older People inquiry will consider recommendations for improving housing and care provisions for older people living in rural areas.

1. **Inquiry objectives:**

The aim of the APPG inquiry is to consider the obstacles to ensuring older people living in rural areas enjoy appropriate housing and have access to adequate at home care and support; and to make recommendations to Government, and those planning, commissioning and operating housing and care in rural areas.

1. **Modus operandi:**

The intention is to assemble a Working Group of approximately 12 Members with expertise in the relevant areas. The Group would meet in July 2017 and establish its work plan. Two site visits would be arranged during August/ September. Three meetings would be held to which expert contributors would be invited in October/ November, December/ January and February 2018.

A report would be prepared in February/ March, and launched in April 2018.

1. **APPG Working Group:**

The Working Group would comprise approximately 12 Members. Details to be announced

1. **APPG Secretariat:**

* Secretary: Jeremy Porteus, Chief Executive, Housing LIN (Housing Learning and Improvement Network)
* Chair: Lord (Richard Best), Co-Chair, APPG on Housing and Care for Older People

1. **Potential Contributors:**

To be announced.

1. **Issues to be covered:**

The Rural Housing Policy Review 2015 spelt out the key issues: for younger households in rural areas, the opportunities for obtaining a decent home are firstly circumscribed. Shortages are compounded by reduced availability of affordable housing and higher prices, relative to urban counterparts. Extra obstacles face social housing providers seeking to help families and younger people in these areas.

The solutions require measures through the planning system, through coordination of landowners, parish councils, local planning authorities, housebuilders and housing associations, to build new affordable homes.

But to what extent are these problems and solutions relevant for older people already living in rural communities? Those who need additional support in their own homes may suffer extra disadvantages in terms of access to social care. There are few Home Improvement Agencies operating in rural areas who can assist in meeting “care and repair” needs. Inadequate public transport and, indeed, broadband connections and closure of rural post offices, shops and pubs can magnify the problems for older people.

On the other hand, rural communities may have advantages too. The voluntary sector is often strong and, paradoxically, loneliness and isolation may be less of an issue. Landowners with rented properties may feel special obligations toward older tenants. Homeowners may have opportunities for equity release, relatively high value homes.

This inquiry aims to compliment work done to date which has concentrated primarily on younger households. It could draw up recommendations for improved policies and practices that bring together the housing dimension with the needs and opportunities for social care for older people in rural localities.

Richard Best

Friday, 7 July 2017